

staff, and each of you. Thank you for your friendships over the years.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I will yield for a couple more minutes for sentiments, and then I wish to say a few words.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the conference report to accompany S. 2943, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany S. 2943, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

#### TRIBUTES TO HARRY REID

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I stand in front of you to commemorate the long life and service of a fellow Nevadan who has given his all to serve our State and this country.

It has been said it is better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both. My colleagues in the Senate and those in the Gallery probably agree with me, no individual in politics embodies that sentiment today more than my colleague from Nevada, HARRY MASON REID.

Today I am on the floor to pay respect to Senate Minority Leader HARRY REID, after 30 years of service in this Chamber, in addition to the years of public service before entering into the Senate.

I know HARRY is notorious for his short conversations—minus today—for hanging up the phone before our conversations end, and sometimes even midsentence, so I will try to keep my comments respectfully short.

Before I truly get into the speech, I must first recognize HARRY's family. As a public official, very often it is time with your family that is most often sacrificed the most, and it is very true, as stated by a leader in our shared faith when he said, "Nothing compensates for failure in the home."

HARRY has been keenly aware of this fact and he shows his adoration. He has shown it for his wife Landra and his five children: Lana, Rory, Leif, Josh, and Key. He has made sure to keep a very close bond with his wife, his chil-

dren, and grandchildren. That is something we all respect and something I wish to emulate.

So what can I say? It is an end of an era for my home State of Nevada. HARRY has devoted his entire adult life to one cause, the State of Nevada and serving it.

Trust me, though we have had our differences when it came to our State, I can attest to one thing; that is, there is no stronger partner to serve the people of Nevada than HARRY REID.

It has been said victorious leaders feel the alternative to winning is totally unacceptable so they figure out what must be done to achieve victory, and then they go after it with everything at their disposal. I believe that describes HARRY REID in a nutshell.

Another measure of success, something HARRY and I have found amusing in the past, is being blamed for all things—all that is good, all that is bad, and all that is ugly. Let me assure you, HARRY has been blamed for a lot, some fairly and some unfairly.

Senator REID has served in every level of government, from city attorney, the State assembly, Lieutenant Governor, U.S. Congressman, and Senator. As a Senator, he is one of only three to serve at least 8 years as majority leader. Even in retirement, due to his far-reaching influence in just about every facet of State, local, and Federal Government, I totally expect he will operate as Nevada's third Senator.

After 26 elections, HARRY knows a thing or two about representing his constituency. He is one of the sharpest tactical minds ever to enter the political arena. Having worked together over the years, my hope is that we have sent a message, not only to all Nevadans but to everyone across this country, that two people who you can tell differ on many opinions can work well together, get things done for their constituents when both are willing.

That is why it is fitting this week that the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act will pass the Senate and will be sent to the President's desk to be signed into law. After fighting for years to refocus Federal policy on the 21st century threats to the lake, we teamed up to ensure important work that preserves the "Jewel of the Sierra" for future generations and that it will advance.

One of HARRY's lasting legacies will be that he and I worked to improve water clarity, reduce wildfire threats, jump-start transportation and infrastructure projects, and combat invasive species at Lake Tahoe. Because of this work, Lake Tahoe has once again been made a national priority.

Another policy initiative that we worked together on was the fight against Yucca Mountain. HARRY, rest assured, I will continue to fight Yucca. My mantra is borrowed from one of your late friends, the late Senator Ted Kennedy, when he said: "The work goes on, the cause endures. . . ."

We will not allow Nevada to turn into America's nuclear dump against the will of its own people.

HARRY, you share the Nevada values such as faith in God, hard work, and commitment to family. I know, because you displayed these values at home, at work, and at church. In fact, actually, that is how we first met HARRY. It was during his tenure as Lieutenant Governor when he spent time in Carson City. Our families were able to meet each other and become friends. Eventually, I became very good friends with his son Leif. HARRY, your dedication to family is extraordinary and it serves as a model to all of us.

I would be remiss if I didn't share a couple of my favorite HARRY REID stories. There are a lot of them. There are a few I cannot share, there are a few I can so I will share with you the ones I can.

Before serving in the Senate, I was elected to the House of Representatives in 2007, until my appointment to the Senate in 2011. Late one evening, I was sitting in my office with my chief of staff, Mac Abrams, discussing a few last-minute details before leaving for the day. It must have been near the end of the week because staffers in the House offices were milling around the hall celebrating a birthday party, enjoying each other's company, playing loud music, and taking a few moments to relax. I was having a hard time keeping the noise from the halls out of my office because of the thin walls. All of a sudden, it was if it all stopped immediately. A quiet hush came over the crowd. It became so quiet, to the point I could hear a small echoing—tap, tap, tap. The taps were magnified. The hallway, which was previously full of life, just immediately died. I began to walk toward the hall to see what it was. I could tell the tapping noise was the sound of footsteps. As they grew louder and closer, I barely heard a peep in that hallway. Sure enough, the next sound I heard was the doorknob to my office turning, and in walks HARRY: "Hi, Dean. Do you have a few minutes?" To me, that story illustrates how much presence HARRY has and the respect he commands no matter where he is. He quieted an entire hallway full of lively staffers by just passing through and walking down that hallway.

The second story occurred more recently. We were in HARRY's office on a January morning soon after I was elected to my first full term. During that campaign, HARRY and his special friends gave me 12 million reasons why I shouldn't be standing there in his office that day, but, hey, this is the Senate and collegiality reigns supreme so I was at that breakfast because our constituents were there.

HARRY and I have known each other for many years, and he made it a point to tell those in attendance how close we were. We were having a good breakfast. He gets up to tell everyone how long he had known me, some of my

background—but he kept highlighting how close we were.

So after his short speech—a little shorter than today—HARRY looks at me, offers for me to say a few of my own words. So I just got up in the front of the room and made sure that everybody knew I could attest that at least one Reid voted for me—HARRY's son Leif. The look on HARRY's face was priceless. Seeing HARRY process the fact that there was a Reid who voted for me is a memory seared in my brain forever.

For me, this speech is not a goodbye because I know we will be seeing you back home in our great State. HARRY, people, like me, may disagree with you at times, but we will always respect you for three things: your devotion to your family, your service to our State and Nation, and your commitment to fighting for what you believe in.

This Chamber has been blessed with some of the greatest men and women who have ever served our Republic. Today I recognize and rise to recognize your place among these figures and hope your career will give inspiration to a young child from Carson City or Searchlight or anywhere else in Nevada to follow in your footsteps.

Again, congratulations on your career. We, the people of Nevada, thank you for your service. Lynne and I wish you and Landra all the best in the years ahead—and as your new senior Senator, I hope I can count on your vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about HARRY REID, our departing, retiring, Democratic leader. It is appropriate he is not on the floor because it is painful for him to sit and hear anybody say anything nice about him. I am sure he is going to be happy not hearing these words, but I want the rest of the folks following the proceedings in the Senate to hear them.

I was first elected to the House of Representatives the same year as HARRY, 1982. A friend of mine, who is an attorney in Chicago named Ed Joyce, said: Be sure and look up this HARRY REID from Nevada because he is a great fellow and a great lawyer. So I did. We came in with a large class of over 50 Members. I went up to HARRY and said: Hi. I am DICK DURBIN from Illinois. We have a mutual friend in Chicago.

He said: Well, great. I am looking forward to working with you.

I said: So are you headed up to Harvard for the orientation? I will see you up there.

He said: No, I am headed to Kansas City. We have settlement conference in a personal injury lawsuit that I couldn't miss.

And I thought to myself, this is some lawyer. Up to the bitter end of his legal career, he was still devoted to the cause of representing clients and rep-

resenting them effectively. When HARRY makes a commitment, he keeps it. I knew at that moment and I have known it ever since.

Four years later, he was in the Senate, I was still in the House, but the day came when I finally got elected to the Senate and joined HARRY REID.

I know we had a good friendship to start because we came to the House together, but I remember the day and I remember the moment when that friendship became something special. It was right there in the well of the Senate.

The most important bill in HARRY's political career was up for a vote. It was on Yucca Mountain.

He came before the rollcall was being announced and he said: How are you going to vote?

I said: Well, HARRY, I have kind of mixed feelings on this.

He said: Stop. I need you. I think I have enough votes, but I may need you. So can you promise that if I need your vote you will be there?

I said: Well, all right.

But he said: But I don't think I will need your vote.

You know what happened next. They called the roll, and at the very end, one of the Democratic Senators he counted on voted the other way. He turned to me and said: Well?

I said: I am giving you my word.

And I voted with HARRY REID on Yucca Mountain.

That was the moment when our friendship became solid. In this business, your word is your bond. When you promise somebody you are going to stick with them come heck or high water, that is when it is tested.

Our friendship grew from that point. I didn't know the time would come, but it did, amazingly, when Tom Daschle lost in the Senate race in South Dakota. The next day, I got a call from HARRY REID. He said: I hope you will consider running for whip. You ought to call every Member of the caucus, and I did.

I quickly learned that many of them had called him and said: Whom do you want to be your whip? And he said: Well, I think DURBIN would be a good choice.

That is why I am sitting here today.

Twelve years later, I am still serving as HARRY REID's whip and still counting the votes on key issues, and during those 12 years, I probably spent more time talking to HARRY REID, my colleague in the Senate, than to any other Member of this body. It is a close, personal friendship and relationship, and we have gone through a lot together.

I listened to his stories. He told some of them today. He returns to his youth, growing up in Searchlight, which we heard about today in just wonderful detail, but he also returns to all of those friendships that were made during those years with people he grew up with in Searchlight and in Henderson, where he went to school. I have come to know these people as if they were

my own classmates because I have heard these stories so many times. It is part of who he is, and it is part of his value system. It explains some important decisions in his life.

When he talks about the Affordable Care Act, we understand that he still remembers that his mother needed dentures, and he saved up money to buy his mother a set of teeth. He thought about the fact that there was no medical care for his family when they needed it the most. He thought about the depression that took his father's life and how that might have been averted with the right medical care. That is what has inspired him to public life.

The one thing that has inspired him the most is Landra. Over and over, I have heard these stories about this courtship. Now, by most standards, getting married when you are 19 is not recommended but, clearly, in this case, it worked out beautifully. When he tells the story of how he finally got Landra to marry him, it appears there was a little bit of tension between Landra's family and this young HARRY REID, to the point where Landra's dad basically said to him: Stay away; I don't want you dating my daughter. Well, they had words and other things, and HARRY insisted. He dated Landra, and they were married. The interesting thing about that is that despite that tension with her father in those early years, HARRY wears a ring that her father used to wear, and he carries it around with pride in memory of her father and her family. He manages to keep those memories as part of his life and his inspiration.

Another thing my colleagues may or may not know is that HARRY is a voracious reader. He reads books constantly. Even after he lost the sight in his right eye, he has continued to read. I love to read as well. It has been one of my real joys in life, exchanging books with HARRY. He reads everything under the sun. One time he told me he was reading the Koran cover to cover. I thought: Man, that is something I am not sure I could even do. He has this curiosity, this interest in learning. Even at this point in his life, as he nears the end of his public career, he wants to continue to learn about people and history and important things.

I look back on experiences we have had together. It was 9/11 when HARRY and I were in a room just a few feet away from here when there was an attack in New York, and in Virginia, and we thought the Capitol would be the next target. We had to race out of this building and stand outside, not knowing which way to turn as we were afraid that we were the next target here at the U.S. Capitol. Those were moments we spent together that I won't forget.

I remember as well that he was one of the first to say to my junior Senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, that he should seriously consider running for President. President Obama the other night said that was one of the most important pieces of advice he received in

making his decision to be a candidate for President of the United States. It is an indication of HARRY's credibility—how much people trust him, and how when he gives his word, you know he is going to be there.

When President Obama was elected, he needed a person—more than one, but he certainly needed a leader in the Senate whom he could count on. He couldn't have had a better ally than HARRY REID. When I look back on the battles over the last 8 years that were waged on behalf of America and HARRY's leadership role with the President, there wasn't another person in this Chamber who could really take as much credit. He would be the last person in the world to do so.

When it came to the stimulus package to turn this economy around, it was HARRY REID counting the votes. It was HARRY REID working every single day the holding hands of those Members of the Senate who weren't quite sure they could be there when he needed them.

It was HARRY REID who was counting up to 60 votes to pass the Affordable Care Act. It took every single Democrat. Not a single Republican would join us in that effort. And HARRY REID had to do it. What was he up against? He was up against Ted Kennedy, who sadly was giving his life up to cancer at that moment and fighting to stay alive until he could vote for that important bill. It was HARRY REID working with other Members of the Senate who would get cold feet on the issue and had to be brought back in. He did it time and again, day after day after day. In the end, 20 million Americans have health insurance because of HARRY REID's determination that what he went through as a kid growing up in Searchlight would not be repeated for families across the United States.

When it came to Wall Street reform and the Frank and Dodd bill that passed through the Senate, HARRY stuck with it and made sure we passed it, hoping to avoid the kind of recession we have been through and the damage that was done to businesses and families and individuals all across the United States.

I knew he was a fighter because I knew his record when it came to being a lawyer. There are so many stories about his clients that I have heard over and over. I feel like they were my clients because I have heard those stories so often.

One of the things I remember and read about in his book I want to share with you. There was a woman named Joyce Martinez who was working in Las Vegas, and the police came in to the casino where she was working and arrested her for writing bad checks at the local grocery store. Joyce tried going to several lawyers and kept insisting they were wrong. She had never done anything like that, but none of these lawyers would take the case. Then she met HARRY REID. HARRY believed her. HARRY said she reminded

him of the people he had grown up with—real people who had nothing but hard work as their life. Like many of the cases HARRY decided to take, his colleagues said: What are you doing wasting your time on this case? Spend your time on worthwhile cases. But every step of the way, despite the ridicule, HARRY decided to stand up for this cocktail waitress. HARRY was determined to keep at it and to make sure that she had a strong voice in court. Ultimately, Joyce won her case, and HARRY REID ended up with a victory that he still counted many years later as one of his great successes as a lawyer.

He also made sure the store that brought the charges against her had to follow the law in the future. So he didn't just help Joyce, he helped a lot of other people as well.

For HARRY, this is what the law was all about as a lawyer and what it was all about as a Senator—making life better for people and families across the United States.

He has fought for so many important causes, and there is one that I want to give special thanks for. It was his commitment to the DREAM Act. I introduced this legislation 16 years ago when I discovered a young woman in Chicago, undocumented, who sadly couldn't go on with her life and go to college because of her legal status. I introduced the DREAM Act to say those young people brought to the United States as kids deserve a second chance. HARRY REID heard my speeches and then met his own DREAMer in Nevada: Astrid Silva, a DREAMer who would often write to HARRY with updates on her life. On December 8, 2010, HARRY REID kept his promise to me and a promise to Astrid and to other DREAMers by allowing the DREAM Act to be brought to the floor for a vote. The Senate Gallery was filled with DREAMers wearing their graduation gowns and caps to remind people they were students who wanted to use their education and talents for the future of America. Fifty-five Senators voted for the DREAM Act that day. HARRY had given us our chance. But it wasn't enough to pass because we needed 60 votes under the Senate rules.

HARRY REID joined me and 22 other Senators in sending a letter to the President of the United States asking that he do everything he can to protect these DREAMers, and he did, with an Executive order known as DACA. To date, 744,000 of these young people have been protected with President Obama's Executive order, because HARRY REID believed, as I believe, that these young people deserve the chance.

Let me tell my colleagues one last story that I think really defines HARRY—his courage, as well as Landra's courage. It goes back to his days as chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission. Being a Mormon, not gambling, not drinking, he was the perfect choice for gaming commissioner. It was hard to consider bribing him. In

the 1970s, HARRY wore a wire for the FBI to catch a bribery attempt. The tape that was transcribed from that wire ends with HARRY jumping out of his seat and shouting: You SOB, you tried to bribe me. HARRY couldn't tolerate that somebody thought he could be bought.

In an effort to retaliate, the mob was mad at HARRY, and they planted a bomb in his family car. Thank goodness, a watchful Landra spotted it and told HARRY: Don't start the car. They are alive today because of Landra's vigilance, but they suffered that indignity because of their courage in standing up for ethics and integrity. Today, when we hear people talking about how rough politics can be, it certainly doesn't lead to a bomb, in most circumstances. In this case, HARRY proved then and today that he is up to that kind of a challenge.

Let me conclude with this. In HARRY's childhood home in Searchlight, there were words embroidered on a pillowcase that his mom hung on the wall. As we have heard, it was a simple and barren little shack that they lived in, but this pillowcase had the following words: "We can, we will, we must," Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

HARRY never forgot those words. They are engrained in his spirit. I want to thank him for what he has done for the Senate, for the State of Nevada, for me, and for his decades of service to the United States. I want to thank Landra and their five kids and their wonderful family for sharing her husband and their father with us for all of these years.

HARRY is leaving the Senate, but I am sure he is not going to quit. He is going to be fighting for Nevada to the end, and he will be fighting for the causes he believes in. He will continue to be a fearless advocate. I wish him and his family all the best.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, Senator HARRY REID and I were both elected to the House in 1982, and over the last 34 years, HARRY has become more than a colleague to me. He is like family.

I call him the "brother I never had," and he calls me the "sister he never had."

Only a brother can hang up on you like HARRY does.

And because a sister's job is to embarrass her brother, I want to talk today about HARRY's incredible, extraordinary career and how much he means to me.

HARRY, his wife, Landra, my husband, Stewart, and I have all grown to be dear friends and enjoy quiet dinners together. Stew and I even invited them to stay with us in our California desert home once—where I cooked, much to HARRY's disbelief.

Theirs is a truly beautiful love story. They met in high school and have been together ever since.

There was one incident early on that could have derailed them. When HARRY went to pick Landra up for a date, her

father, a Jewish immigrant, was opposed to his daughter dating a man with no religion.

But that wasn't going to stop HARRY. He actually got into a fistfight with his future father-in-law and punched him in the face.

As HARRY simply said, "It wasn't the greatest beginning."

But love always prevails. HARRY and Landra eloped during college, and Landra's parents eventually came around to supporting them.

And throughout HARRY's career—throughout every campaign, every election, every bump in the road—Landra has been by HARRY's side, and he by hers.

Though he has risen to the highest levels of success, HARRY has never forgotten where he came from and has always fought like hell for his State. He was born in what he calls a "flyspeck on the map"—Searchlight, NV in 1939, a year before me.

To say he grew up poor is an understatement. His childhood home had no toilet or running water, and in order to attend high school, he had to move in with relatives 40 miles away.

Nothing came easy for HARRY, but he never let that deter him. In high school, he wanted to buy a car, so he took a job at a bakery that required him to wake up at 4 a.m. during the week—3 a.m. on weekends. In his spare time, he took up boxing, which earned him a college scholarship.

His very humble beginnings taught him the value of hard work. We have all heard HARRY tell the story of working six days a week as a U.S. Capitol Police Officer while putting himself through law school full-time at George Washington University. For years, he proudly displayed his badge here in his D.C. office. Upon graduation from law school, he returned to Nevada as an attorney specializing in what he called, "the cases nobody would take" before starting his career in elected office: First, as the Henderson city attorney, then as an assemblyman, Lieutenant Governor, and chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission, before winning election to the House of Representatives.

After two terms in the House, HARRY won a seat in the Senate, where he gained a reputation for integrity and fairness. He was elected as our leader in 2004, and I believe he will go down in history as one of the best.

HARRY is a workhorse, not a show horse.

He is soft-spoken and a wonderful listener, but is not afraid to speak up.

He doesn't seek the spotlight—in fact, he often avoids it at all costs—but he also knows how to use it to fight for those without a voice.

And, he takes the time to know every member of his caucus—what makes us tick, what our core issues are, and where we each draw the line.

I want to relate one particular story that truly exemplifies the leader HARRY is.

One December night in 2009, I got a call from HARRY and Senator CHUCK SCHUMER. They were trying to negotiate the final issue on the Affordable Care Act, and this was our last chance to get the bill passed.

We needed every single Democrat in order to end the Republican filibuster, but we had reached a stumbling block: Senator Ben Nelson believed the Federal subsidy in the ACA should not go towards abortion.

If he voted against the bill, Obamacare would be gone. So HARRY trusted Senator PATTY MURRAY and me with the crucial responsibility of finding a solution.

For 13 grueling hours, my team and I would come up with an idea, Senator SCHUMER would run it over to Senator Nelson, and we would volley back and forth until we finally landed on a compromise.

The bill was saved, and today, more than 20 million Americans have health care—many for the first time ever—thanks, in large part, to HARRY REID. He never gave up, and he trusted members of his caucus to help get this bill—one of the most important health care bills in a generation—across the finish line.

HARRY has perfected the art of strategy and negotiation. He knows when to compromise and when to stand up and fight—especially when it comes to his beloved Nevada.

He has accomplished far too many things to mention, but I want to quickly talk about a few issues.

No one fought harder against the plan to dump nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, which would have threatened the health and safety of Nevadans. Since he was first elected to Congress 34 years ago, HARRY fought proposal after proposal until the plan was finally scrapped—almost entirely because of him.

He has been instrumental in the fight to protect and restore Lake Tahoe—which is shared between our two States. HARRY created the Lake Tahoe Summit and worked across party lines to help keep Tahoe blue.

He has protected more than three million acres of wilderness, established Great Basin National Park, and has fought to protect our landmark environmental laws.

And when we were in the throes of the worst economic crisis in a generation, HARRY fought tooth and nail to stop the hemorrhaging of jobs and help Americans keep their homes—especially in Nevada, which was one of the hardest hit States.

HARRY worked tirelessly to shepherd the Recovery Act through Congress—a monumental task in our political environment. At every turn, the right wing threw everything they had at us, but HARRY took it all on the chin with his strength, stamina, and fortitude.

He stepped up and helped us avoid Armageddon, and I give a great deal of credit to Senator REID and President Obama for that.

At his core, that is who HARRY REID is: When he believes something to be right, he doesn't think twice about putting the gloves on, hopping in the ring and fighting for what he believes in. He just does it.

For this, and for so many other reasons, HARRY has made the Democratic Party better. He has made Nevada better. He has made our country better. And on a personal level, HARRY has made me better. I will forever be grateful for his leadership, his mentorship, and most of all, his friendship.

In closing, I would like to read the words I wrote about him.

HARRY . . . thank you for the strength you give to us.

HARRY . . . thank you for the way you make them cuss.

So you're not a TV star,  
We just take you as you are.

HARRY, blue and true,  
No one like you.

HARRY . . . working from the day until the night.

HARRY . . . never turns away when there's a fight.

Good thing there are no Senate duels!  
HARRY, blue and true,  
No one like you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUDIT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to alert the new Trump administration to a problem in the Defense Department. There is a festering sore needing high-level attention. I am talking about what turns out to be a formidable barrier. It stands in the way of an important goal: auditing the books of the Department of Defense. At times, this barrier makes the goal seem unattainable.

The need for annual financial audits was originally established by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990. By March of 1992, each agency was to present a financial statement to an inspector general for audit. Today, all have earned unqualified or clean opinions, except one, and guess what. The Department of Defense is that one. It has the dubious distinction, out of all of the Federal Government, of earning an unblemished string of failing opinions known as disclaimers.

In the face of endless stumbling, Congress drew a new line in the sand. It is in section 1003 of the fiscal year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act. The Pentagon was given an extra 7 years to clean up the books and get ready. Guess what. The slipping and sliding never stopped. The revised September 2017 deadline is staring us in the face, and all the evidence tells us the Department will never make it.

The 25-year effort to audit the books is stuck in the mud.

Billions of dollars have been spent trying to solve the root cause of the problem, and that root cause is a broken accounting system. But the fix is nowhere in sight. Until control at the transaction level is achieved, auditing the books is nothing more than a pipe-dream.

Under the fiscal year 2010 law, the Financial Improvement and Auditing Readiness Plan, called FIAR, is supposed to tell us whether the financial statements of the Defense Department "are validated as ready for audit by not later than September 30, 2017."

The latest FIAR report hit the street last month, but it does not answer the key question: Is the Department of Defense ready for audit? I read it, and I don't know for sure. It is a study in fuzzy thinking. It is kind of like a riddle, and here is why.

True, the Department boldly declares that it is audit-ready. But in the very same breath, the Comptroller and Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Mike McCord, takes a step backward. He warns that earning a clean opinion is "many years" away. Being audit-ready should offer a reasonable prospect for success, but something is really out of whack here.

So the ultimate objective of section 1003 is a successful audit or clean opinion. Mr. McCord's words seem to turn that objective upside down. How can the Department be audit-ready and meet the deadline if it is still years away from a clean opinion?

Mr. McCord's message appears to be downright confusing, contradictory, and possibly misleading. If he knows the Department of Defense is years away from a clean opinion, then he must also know that it is not audit-ready or even close to it. He has to know that the accounting system is incapable of producing reliable information that meets prescribed standards. That tells me the Department of Defense is not audit-ready yet, and he knows it—like everyone else.

Before he steps down, Mr. McCord owes us an explanation for the confusing statements. And once the new Pentagon leadership is up to speed, I look forward to further clarification.

I also hope this new team will address the wisdom of doing full financial statement audits when there is limited control at the transaction level. By proceeding with full-scale audits without it, Mr. McCord has put the cart in front of the horse. Spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year for audits with a zero probability of success is wasteful.

I would like to remind my colleagues why a successful audit is so important. First and foremost, it would conform with constitutional requirements. It would strengthen internal controls and facilitate the detection of fraud and theft. But it is also important for more practical reasons: It would help bring about better, more informed decision-making. Management can't make good decisions with bad information. If accounting information is inaccurate and incomplete—as it is today at the Department of Defense—then management doesn't know what anything costs or how the money is being spent, and if they don't have that information at their fingertips, how could they possibly make good decisions?

January 2015 was when the report I was referring to was first put out, but it was just now made public. Recent revelations about the \$125 billion in "administrative waste," which was allegedly suppressed by senior defense officials, is living proof of bad decisions. If the time ever comes when the Department of Defense's accounting system can generate reliable information, then such mistakes could be avoided.

So I keep coming back to the same old questions: Why has faulty accounting information been tolerated at the Pentagon for all these years? How is it that the Pentagon is able to develop the most advanced weapons the world has ever known with relative ease and yet, for some strange reason, it seems unable to acquire the tools it needs to keep track of the money it spends? Why is this national disgrace being tolerated at the Pentagon?

There are never-ending bureaucratic explanations, but there don't seem to be any solutions.

With good leadership, this problem can be solved. The man nominated to be the next Secretary of Defense, Mr. James Mattis, strikes me as the kind of person who will tackle this problem head-on and run it to the ground until fixed. His record suggests he will not tolerate this kind of endless foot-dragging and inexcusable failure. Twenty-five years of lameduck excuses probably won't sit too well with this marine general. Either he will whip the accounting system into shape or heads will roll. According to press reports, "failure" is not a word that he knows or uses.

With a new sheriff in town, maybe the endless, helpless "woe is me" hand-wringing at the Pentagon is about to come to a screeching halt. A modern, fully integrated finance and accounting system might be more than just the dream it has been.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to have a prop with me.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I rise here in the Chamber to give my last speech in the Senate. I want to describe some experiences I have had that are at the heart of my service in the Congress.

As a staffer, I worked for the House International Relations Committee and for Chairman Benjamin Gilman. He had been asked by Cardinal John O'Connor of New York to investigate the plight of Catholics in northern Bosnia. From that assignment, I went to northern Bosnia to meet with Bishop Komanic, who started out the meeting in a very difficult fashion.

He started by saying: Am I a human? Am I a human? Am I?

I said: Yes, you are.

He said: You foreign delegations always don't do anything for me.

I said to Bishop Komanic: Please give me one task that I can take on for you.

He said: If there is one thing I need, it is to get my human rights office head, Father Tomislava Matanovic—who was recently captured by a very notorious criminal, the police chief of Prijedor, Bosnia, who was infamous for starting the first concentration camp in Europe after 1945. It was called the Omarska Camp. The man who ran this place was named Simo Drljaca. He pushed 700 bodies down the shaft of this mine. In this work, he had probably captured the priest I wanted, Tomislava Matanovic.

When I went back to the States, as a reservist, I ransacked the DOD databases. We found from intelligence reports that we suspected this police chief of Prijedor had been the kidnapper of Tomislava Matanovic. I went to the CIA and asked to meet with this man so I could urge him to give this priest back to me. When Simo Drljaca met with me, he gave me this memento of Serbia. It has the markings of St. George slaying a dragon, with a date of 1994, and various Serbian markings.

After I learned so much about Simo Drljaca, I asked the Clinton administration to make sure they could indict him for war crimes, crimes against humanity, to make sure we could eventually bring him down.

When the Bosnian secret police brought him to me, he gave me this memento, which I have kept under my desk. He gave that to me hoping maybe he would not get picked up. Luckily, the Clinton administration had decided to pick him up. They had a typically obscure DOD acronym to cover the status of this kind of person. They called them PIFWC, persons indicted for war crimes.

Eventually we got an operation together to arrest Simo Drljaca, and the British Special Air Service carried it out. When they waited for Simo, they waited by a riverbank for him to do his Sunday fishing with his son.

An officer had painstakingly memorized the Serbian's arrest record and indictment so he could read it to Drljaca in his British accent. When he started reading the indictment, Drljaca reached down into his fishing tackle box and shot the British arresting officer. Luckily, the British officer did survive, was wearing body armor. When that shot rang out, the security team across from the river put several rounds into Drljaca's chest. He dropped dead right there at the beach.

After I heard about this, I was so proud to be part of this congressional team and to still be an officer in the U.S. Navy.

I will say that this institution, and the U.S. military that has given rise from the appropriations we have given, is the greatest force for human dignity that has ever been put forward. I was so proud we brought this monster to justice. The guy who put together the first concentration camp in Europe had been stopped, and he could no longer

hurt anyone. And this memento has been underneath my desk here in the Senate ever since to remind me of the basic human values that we share so dear—that we have here. I would say the United States is now the greatest force for human dignity that we have ever seen. To make sure those values continue has been at the heart of my service here in the Senate and in the Congress.

Let me conclude by thanking some critical people.

I thank Congressman John Porter for hiring me back in 1984, when I started my service here in the Congress; Chairman Ben Gilman of New York for putting me on that international committee; the people of the 10th Congressional District of Illinois who first sent me to the House and the people of Illinois who also sent me to represent their State here; all the family and friends who put me here: Karen Garber and Michael Morgan, especially Dodie McCracken, who was always at my side—people who wanted to make sure we had a person of thoughtful, independent values who could serve here in the Congress.

To conclude, I want to give a message to the people of Illinois. For the people of Illinois, I would say: Take heart, Illinois, that you come from one of the most industrious States in the Union, the fifth largest industrial State.

Especially after the problems we had with Governor Blagojevich, we have been a little down in the dumps.

A lot of times, I will pull out my iPhone and ask people in the State the same question: Who invented the iPhone, the cell phone? And the answer is, Martin Cooper from Winnetka, IL. On the top of the iPhone is a transmitter, and I remind us that the first cell phone call in the world was made from the 50 yard line of Soldier Field in Chicago. That trillion-dollar industry started right in the middle of our State. That, we should always remember.

Lots of times when I am giving this speech, I will say: If it weren't for the people of Illinois, a lot of the people you know would be missing teeth, because we invented modern dentistry with G.V. Black in Jacksonville, and our houses would not be so clean, because we invented the vacuum cleaner.

People on the southwest side of Chicago say: KIRK, tell them that we invented the zipper—which they did.

People in Peoria will say: Hey, remind them that we invented the electric blanket. And they did.

From the electric blanket to the vacuum cleaner and the cell phone, the people of Illinois have been so innovative.

Now we have a unique time in history. I can safely say without contradiction here in the Senate that the Chicago Cubs are now the World Series champions. As I have said so many times, any professional baseball team can have a bad century, but we have fi-

nally killed the curse of the goat and all the curses that befell our professional baseball team.

I would say take heart, Illinois. You are so inventive that you produce most of the pumpkins in the country. When we sit down to Thanksgiving pumpkin pie, that is 80 percent Illinois.

Mr. President, with that, I yield the remainder of my time to the victor of the Illinois Senate race, Senator-Elect TAMMY DUCKWORTH.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it is becoming too common a theme that the U.S. Senate, in the closing days of session, rushes to consider a conferenced defense authorization bill. Earlier this year, we considered one of the largest defense authorization bills in history, and the Senate considered few amendments and was afforded a truncated debate period. Worse, the authorization threatened to bust a carefully balanced budget agreement, by misusing overseas contingency operations, OCO, funds for base spending. I opposed that bill. Now, in the closing hours of the Congress, we are faced with a vote on a conferenced version of that bill. It is far from perfect.

However, like open government groups across the spectrum, I am pleased to see that a dangerous provision concerning the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA, that Senator GRASSLEY and I strongly opposed has been removed from the final bill. This overbroad provision, which was part of the reason I opposed the Senate bill, could have categorically exempted a vast amount of Department of Defense information from public disclosure, including potentially the Pentagon's handling of sexual assault complaints, reports about defective equipment issued to soldiers in combat zones, and documented health hazards faced by military families living on bases abroad. Hiding such information from public scrutiny would directly undermine the transparency required to address threats to the safety and security of our troops. As the chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, the committee with jurisdiction over FOIA matters, Senator GRASSLEY and I are glad that our concerns were taken seriously and addressed. Now that this provision has been struck, our Nation's premier transparency law can continue its critical mission of watching over the safety of those who risk it all to keep us safe.

I am also grateful for the vital support this bill provides to our military personnel and their families and the augmentation of our preparedness to deter, or meet, future threats through a wise investment in technology and people. As the world becomes less stable, this bill includes a number of measures to reaffirm our long-standing commitments to our partners abroad who work with us to make the world safer.

Nonetheless, I still have concerns with a number of ill-considered provi-

sions in this bill. I am not yet satisfied that sufficient consideration has been given to how the caps on general officers affect the National Guard, where leadership often alternates between Army and Air Force officers. No one has accounted for why the vice chief of the National Guard Bureau is the only Vice Chief to not have a grade established by statute. And I remain concerned that this bill removes the requirement that the deputy commander of the U.S. Northern Command be drawn from the ranks of the National Guard. It is our National Guard leaders who are most capable of responding to domestic disasters.

Regrettably, this year's defense authorization bill also misses an opportunity to provide the Obama administration with the flexibility it needs to finally close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. Rather than putting an end to this shameful chapter in our Nation's history, the bill maintains the status quo by extending the unnecessary prohibition on constructing facilities within the United States to house Guantanamo detainees and continues the counterproductive ban on transferring detainees to the United States for detention and trial. Closing the detention facility at Guantanamo is in our national security interest. It is the right thing to do. I strongly oppose the needless barriers to doing that in this bill.

In the end, I do believe this authorization bill more appropriately provides for the common defense. Nonetheless, Members of Congress, on either side of the aisle, should not tolerate this perennially constrained debate over the authorization of over half of our Nation's budget. Similarly, if Congress considers legislation next year about the important question of civilian control of the military, it should not do so under the abbreviated, restricted debate by which we will finally approve the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2017.

It was my highest honor when Vermonters voted to send me back to the Senate this past November. In a time of uncertainty, they are looking for leaders. I am, too. I hope Senate leaders next year will insist on regular order and the deliberative process that has long been the hallmark of this body.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to discuss the passage of my legislation, the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which was included in the fiscal year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, conference report. I especially want to thank Senator McCain who partnered with me on this legislation and who has been a true champion in the Senate for human rights and the fight against corruption. I also thank Senator BOB CORKER, Senator JACK REED, Congressman ED ROYCE, and Congressman ELIOT ENGEL for their help getting this important bill over the finish line.



Before I discuss the specifics of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, I want to discuss how we got here. In the 112th Congress, we passed the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act. That act placed sanctions on Russian officials responsible for the death of Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian lawyer who was arrested after he uncovered massive corruption in Russia. In 2009, Sergei Magnitsky died after suffering torturous conditions in pretrial detention. Those responsible for his torture and death were not brought to justice in Russia and some were even decorated and promoted.

With enactment of the Magnitsky legislation in 2012, the United States sent an unambiguous warning to gross violators of human rights in Russia that we will not allow them to travel to our shores and to use our financial system. The Magnitsky Act resulted in dozens of Russians implicated in his death from receiving travel visas and from benefiting from our financial system—and represented an extraordinary victory for human rights defenders in Russia.

As we know all too well, however, human rights violations against dissidents, journalists, whistleblowers, and rights advocates aren't unique to Russia. That is why Senator MCCAIN and I introduced the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which gives the President the authority to deny human rights abusers and those engaged in significant acts of corruption entry into the United States and access to our financial institutions.

Including significant acts of corruption as a sanctionable offense is an important addition to this legislation. The correlation between corruption, human rights abuses, and repressive governments is clear. Corruption destabilizes democracies, weakens a country's rule of law and can stall a nation's development. And those who call out these abuses are often threatened, physically or psychologically abused, or worse.

As many of my colleagues know, the United States has long struggled with the best way to address human rights violations and corruption around the globe. With passage of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, I believe we now have the tools to hold accountable gross violators of human rights and those who engage in serious acts of corruption in a way that bolsters both our national security and foreign policy goals. Bad actors from South Sudan to Venezuela and Azerbaijan to Cambodia are on notice that they can no longer escape the consequences of their actions, even when their home country fails to act. But in my view, the most important message this legislation sends is that the United States stands in solidarity with all those who stand up against corruption and human rights violations—and we do so through both words and actions.

I, again, thank my Senate colleagues for their support for this important bill and for joining me in standing up for all those who seek a more just world, even though doing so often puts their own lives in jeopardy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I want to take an opportunity to salute and thank and commend my colleagues who are departing.

#### MARK KIRK

Mr. President, Senator KIRK, my colleague from Illinois, just finished his remarks.

MARK and I had the opportunity and the privilege to work on many things together. He is a Navy commander. He never lets me forget that. He always called me Major; I always called him Commander. He served the State of Illinois with great integrity, great energy, and great spirit, and we thank him for that very much.

Thank you for your service to the Nation in the uniform of the United States Navy.

We also have other colleagues departing: Senator AYOTTE from New Hampshire; Senator BOXER of California; Senator COATS of Indiana; as I mentioned, Senator KIRK of Illinois; Senator MIKULSKI of Maryland; Senator REID of Nevada; and Senator VITTER of Louisiana. Each has brought passion in their work to best serve their constituents, and the institution of the Senate and the Nation are better for this service. I am better for knowing them, working with them, and having the opportunity to share with them, and I want to thank them for their service. Let me mention a few words with respect to all of these distinguished Senators.

#### KELLY AYOTTE

Mr. President, KELLY AYOTTE and I worked together for many years on the Armed Services Committee. What she brought was an unparalleled commitment to and passion for the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States. She wanted them to have a quality of life that reflects their service and their sacrifice. She wanted them to have the training and the equipment that would protect them as they engage our foes, and she wanted to make sure they knew that we were always conscious of their sacrifice and service. She did this in so many different ways, and she did it so well.

She was particularly committed to making sure that the A-10 aircraft remained in our inventory. As someone who as a younger person was an infantry officer, I appreciated having seen in training how effective that system is to protect our forces on the ground, and her efforts were unstinting to make sure that our forces were fully protected. Again, that is just one example of her commitment.

#### BARBARA BOXER

Mr. President, BARBARA BOXER and I had the privilege to serve both in the

House and the Senate together. My first term in the House of Representatives was BARBARA's last term in the House before she was elected to the Senate. She is an extraordinary, tenacious fighter—remarkably so. She has fought for women's rights. She has fought for the rights of families, for people who needed economic assistance, and for people who needed a chance because she realized that the essence of America is opportunity—opportunity for all, not just for those who are privileged or who have the benefit of wealth or power but for all. She has done this extraordinarily well.

A great deal of her energy was directed to environmental protection because that is something that benefits all of us and that is something that is really the biggest legacy we will give to the next generation and the generations that follow. No one has more fiercely defended the environment—not just for a narrow interest, not just for a temporary expedient but for the long-term health and wealth of the American people.

#### DAN COATS

Mr. President, DAN COATS and I served together. This goes back to both his tenures in the Senate. DAN and I served in the Armed Services and HELP Committees. He was a remarkable Member. He continues to be a remarkable Member. He left us for a while to serve as Ambassador to Germany. Once again—no surprise—he distinguished himself with his thoughtful support of American policy, with his international approach to issues of concern, and with the ability to bring people together, not just colleagues in the Senate but, also, international colleagues.

When he returned, I was very, very grateful for his help. Senator DEAN HELLER and I were working very hard together on a bipartisan basis to help unemployment insurance extension. DAN joined us in that effort, and I thank him for that. It reflects the huge range of talent and interests that he has and, also, his commitment to the men and women of Indiana, particularly the working men and women of Indiana.

#### MARK KIRK

Mr. President, MARK KIRK I have mentioned. I had the privilege, the opportunity, and the pleasure of being able to salute him as he was here. Again, we always greet each other as Major Reed and Commander Kirk, and I see deep symbolism and deep affection in regard to that exchange. I wish him well as he goes forth.

#### DAVID VITTER

Mr. President, DAVID VITTER and I served together on the Armed Services Committee, and we continue to serve together on the Banking Committee. As a senior member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, he has been very critical in ensuring that we continue our commitment to infrastructure. Infrastructure is a word now

that is getting a lot of attention. Years ago, DAVID was interested in that, not only interested but instrumental in making sure we did our best to keep up with infrastructure so that we could have a productive America, so that people could enjoy the benefits, and so that we could be competitive in a global economy.

He has done a great deal. One area where we also shared an interest is his Home Owner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, which became law in 2014. This was critical not just to Louisiana but to every coastal State, including Rhode Island. His energy, his commitment, and his dedication made it a success. I want to thank him for that, and I wish him well as he goes forward.

BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. President, BARBARA MIKULSKI—what an extraordinary individual. She is a pioneer. She was the first Democratic woman Senator elected in her own right. She is the longest serving woman in the history of the Congress. BARBARA MIKULSKI and history are one in the same. She has made it. She came from very modest roots in Baltimore. She talked yesterday on the floor about her father and mother running a small grocery store in her neighborhood. She took that sense of community, that sense of dedication, and that sense of selfless service to others. As she said, she was inspired by the nuns that taught her, and that inspiration was extraordinary and fully realized in her life. There are a lot of Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of Notre Dame who are sitting back today thinking: I knew that young lady had it in her.

She certainly did. She led us on the Appropriations Committee, the first woman to chair the committee. She has done so much to assist me on issues that are so important to Rhode Island. I must say that she and Kit Bond, one of her colleagues, were extraordinary in recognizing the problems of lead exposure in children and providing needed resources. I thank her for that.

She has assisted the fishermen in communities in Rhode Island with real assistance and real aid. She has done it over and over. She has given me profound advice, counsel, and kindness.

She said yesterday on the floor: The best ship in the world is friendship. I agree, but ultimately the measure of our service and of our days is kindness. I must say that by that measure, she is a very towering figure in the Senate, in the history of the United States, and I thank her.

HARRY REID

Mr. President, finally, there is our leader, HARRY REID. Much has been said about HARRY today. I will not go over the extraordinary tale of a young man from Searchlight, NV. He was a boxer and a Capitol Police officer while he was working his way through law school. He has always been a fighter—and a fighter for those who need help, not for the powerful but for the people without power. For those without a voice, he has given a voice.

I have always appreciated his counsel, his guidance, and his support, which were important to my constituents and important to all Americans. We have worked on numerous pieces of legislation together to address the housing crisis, to extend unemployment insurance, to make college more affordable, and to improve mental health services, to name just a few.

As he said today in his remarks, one of his achievements is to be able to give health care protection to millions of Americans who didn't have it and if it is taken away will not have it. He did that because it was the right thing to do, because he understood from his own personal experience how traumatizing and how debilitating and, ultimately, how destructive the lack of access to good health care—both physical health care and mental health care—is to America, and, also, how it does make us productive. Simply having health care is not just a good thing to do, it is a smart economic thing to do. He led that fight for us.

It has been an honor to serve alongside HARRY REID and to see this extraordinary legislator work his way quietly sometimes—many times—but persistently. There is no one more persistent than HARRY. His steady, unselfish leadership will continue to guide us and his example will continue to guide us.

I have been very fortunate. I have had the privilege to serve with these ladies and gentlemen, and I want to thank them for their service.

TRIBUTE TO VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

Mr. President, I was also very privileged to serve with the Vice President of the United States, JOE BIDEN. The Vice President was here yesterday. I was here listening to the comments. I must add, if I could, some words of my own.

JOE BIDEN is a true statesman. I had the privilege of serving with him for over a decade. We traveled together to places such as Afghanistan and Iraq. I am honored to have gotten to know him and his wonderful family. Even though he is Vice President of the United States of America—the second highest office of the land—I know the titles he is proudest to hold are father, grandfather, husband, brother, and, after that, Senator.

A tribute to JOE BIDEN really has to extend to some others, and one person I want to single out is his sister, Valerie Biden Owens. Val is not only his closest adviser but the architect of his first campaign and every one thereafter. At a time when very few women were running U.S. Senate campaigns, Val was responsible for electing a 29-year-old newcomer. When tragedy struck, she was the one who helped bring him back, who enabled him to serve the people of Delaware and, ultimately, the people of the United States and of the world. She is a brilliant strategist who has gone on to advise many officeholders. We thank her for her lasting contributions, and I wanted to make sure she got some credit.

Both the Vice President and Val are quick to note the real credit goes to their parents—Catherine Jean Finnegan Biden, his mom, and his late, great father, Joe Sr. The Vice President and I would often joke—and it is not a joke; it is actually a truth: Always aspire to be half as good as mom and dad. That is an Irish aspiration. Joe has made it. I am still working on it, but he is at least half as good as these extraordinary people.

If you have spent any time with the Vice President, you know that he is famous for quoting his father and his mother and the wisdom they imparted to all the children—Joe, Val, Jimmy, and Frank. I think you have heard Senator BIDEN, Chairman BIDEN, and Vice President BIDEN say: "I give you my word as a Biden." You know you can take that to the bank. He meant it.

Once you heard that, without hesitation, you know he was there with you and would not equivocate, would not deviate, and would be with you.

I had the privilege of not only working with Senator BIDEN, but I also had the privilege of working with a young captain in the U.S. Army, at least briefly, as we visited him, and that was CPT Beau Biden of the Delaware National Guard. Beau Biden didn't have to join the National Guard. He didn't have to volunteer for Iraq, but he felt it was his duty and his obligation. When we were together with him in Iraq, you saw someone who personified the very best of this Nation—a soldier, someone conscientious, someone who would give his all, give his life for others and, particularly, give every ounce of energy and service to this great Nation.

Anyone who met Beau knew he was a Biden. He didn't have to say it. He looked like his dad but, more importantly, he acted like his dad—strong, tough, proud, dedicated, committed to helping others, particularly those who needed a chance, who needed a hand up. He had a passion for social justice, compassion, and that element of kindness. In the sum of his days—of Beau's days—he certainly surpassed that test of kindness, decency, and compassion.

The Biden family has known a great deal of tragedy—more than most families—but they have stuck together, and they have shared both moments of triumph and moments of profound sadness. Together, they have shaped history and made this a better nation and a better world. All of us who have had the privilege of knowing JOE, Jill, and their family are better people.

Mr. President, let me thank you. Mr. Vice President, Senator, JOE, thank you.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.



The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, the Constitution gives the Congress the power and responsibility to provide for the common defense, raise and support armies, provide and maintain a Navy, make rules for the government and regulation of the land naval forces. For 54 consecutive years, Congress has fulfilled these more important constitutional duties by passing the National Defense Authorization Act. Today the Senate has a chance to make it 55 years.

It is precisely because of this legislation's critical importance to our national security that it is still one of the few bills in Congress that enjoys bipartisan support year after year. Indeed, this year's NDAA has been supported by Senators on both sides of the aisle. The Senate Armed Services Committee overwhelmingly approved the NDAA in a 23-to-3 vote back in May. The full committee followed by passing the NDAA with a bipartisan vote of 85 to 13. After a collaborative and productive conference process, the House passed the NDAA conference report with an overwhelming vote of 375 to 34. I hope the Senate will deliver another resounding vote today.

I thank the committee's ranking member, the Senator from Rhode Island, JACK REED. Despite his lack of education at West Point and the impending doom of the Army football team this weekend, I appreciate the thoughtfulness and bipartisan spirit with which he approaches our national security. This is a much better bill thanks to the Senator from Rhode Island. I appreciate his friendship, and more than that, I appreciate the commitment he and I share to the defense of this Nation and the men and women who serve it.

I also thank the majority leader, the Senator from Kentucky, for his commitment to bringing the NDAA to the floor and for his support throughout the year to make sure this legislation received full consideration and debate.

Our Nation faces the most diverse and complex array of crises since the end of World War II—great power competition with Russia and China, rogue states like Iran and North Korea, and the enduring threat of radical Islamist terrorism. Rising to the challenges of a more dangerous world requires bold reform to our national defense, and that is exactly what the NDAA delivers.

The last major reorganization of the Department of Defense was the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which marks its 30th anniversary this year. Last fall, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a series of 13 hearings on defense reform with 52 of our Nation's foremost defense experts and leaders. We followed up these hearings with a comprehensive review of the roles, missions, and organization of the major actors in the Department of Defense.

This review was borne out of concern that the organization of the department too often inhibits, rather than enables, the talented people serving there to fulfill their duties at a time of major strategic and technological change. Building on this work, the NDAA seeks to improve strategic integration across functional components of the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

At a time when the Department of Defense faces numerous threats that all span different regions, functions, and military domains, the Secretary of Defense needs better tools to more effectively develop integrated solutions and strategies for critical department objectives. To this end, the NDAA would allow the next Secretary of Defense to create and delegate decision-making authority to a series of cross-functional teams to achieve core objectives of the Department. These cross-functional teams would support the Secretary and Deputy Secretary in performing strategic integration more effectively in efficiency.

Improving the effectiveness of our defense enterprise also requires targeting excess bureaucracy. Over the past 30 years, the end strength of the joint forces has decreased by 38 percent. I want to emphasize that. The end strength of the uniformed military has decreased by 38 percent, but the ratio of four-star officers to the overall force has increased by 65 percent. Especially at a time of constrained defense budgets, the military services must right-size their officer corps and shift as many personnel as possible from staff functions to operational and other vital roles. That is why the NDAA directs a reduction of 110 general and flag officers on Active Duty, and it requires the Secretary of Defense to conduct a study that will identify a further 10-percent reduction. Likewise, the NDAA includes a reduction to the number of senior executive service civilian employees in the Department of Defense commensurate with a reduction to general and flag officers.

The legislation also imposes a limitation on funds used for staff augmentation contracts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the military department, a practice which has gotten completely out of control.

The NDAA also caps the size of the National Security Council staff at 200 professional staff and detailees. The past 25 years has brought a consistent and steady growth of the NSC staff from 40 during the George Herbert Walker Bush administration to more than 100 in the Clinton administration, to more than 200 during the George W. Bush administration, to reports of nearly 400 under the current administration.

In addition to the growth and size, and largely enabled by it, we have seen an expansion of the NSC's staff role into tactical and operational issues. NDAA will push the staff toward prioritizing the strategic mission that

led Congress to create it in the first place. I will repeat that. The National Security Council was created to give advice and counsel to the President of the United States, not to give rules of engagement and specific instructions to officers, generals, and admirals in the field.

Former Secretary Gates quite often tells the story of when he was visiting Kabul, Afghanistan, and walked by an office where there was a red phone, and Secretary Gates said: What is that? They said: That is our line to the NSC.

My friends, we have 30-something staffers at the NSC who are giving directions as to how to carry out operations in the field. It is simply outrageous. By the way, it not only has an effect on morale but also on the ability to address the challenges on the battle-grounds.

For years after the end of the Cold War, the United States enjoyed a near monopoly on advanced military technology, such as stealth, precision-guided munitions, unmanned systems, and the advanced communications that enable network-centric warfare. That is changing rapidly. From China and Russia to Iran and North Korea, we see militaries that are developing, fielding, and employing long-range, precision-guided weapons, advanced fighter aircraft, anti-access and aerial denial systems, and growing space in cyber capabilities. The result is that we are at real and increasing risk of losing the military technological dominance that we have taken for granted for 30 years. That is why innovation cannot be an auxiliary office at the Department of Defense. It must be the central mission of its acquisition system. Unfortunately, that is not the case with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, known as AT&L. It has grown too big, tries to do too much, and is too focused on compliance at the expense of innovation. That is why the NDAA disestablishes AT&L and divides its duties between two new offices, a new Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, and an Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment.

The job of research and engineering will be developing defense technologies that can ensure a new era of U.S. qualitative military dominance. The job of acquisition and sustainment will focus on the execution of acquisition functions, ensuring compliance, and lowering risks to taxpayers. God knows we need to lower risks to taxpayers. These organizational changes complement the additional acquisition reforms in the NDAA. The legislation creates new pathways for the Department of Defense to do business with nontraditional defense firms. It streamlines regulations to procure goods and services. It provides new authorities for the rapid prototyping, acquisition, and fielding of new capabilities, and, critically, the NDAA establishes a preference for fixed-price contracts. The

overuse of cost-type contracts and the complicated and expensive government bureaucracy that goes with them serves as a barrier to entry for commercial, nontraditional, and small businesses that are driving the innovation our military needs.

Continuing down the path of reform, the NDAA initiates a comprehensive modernization of the military health care system to provide beneficiaries with higher quality care, better access to care, and a better experience of care. The NDAA includes provisions that expand DOD telehealth capabilities, reform TRICARE health care plans, modernize TRICARE medical support contracts, streamline the administration of the Defense Health Agency and military medical treatment facilities, and establish high-performance military-civilian integrated health delivery systems.

The NDAA ensures we maintain battlefield medicine as a pocket of excellence in the military health system by taking steps to improve trauma care in military hospitals and develop enduring partnerships with civilian military centers and hospitals. These reforms constitute an important first step in the evolution of the military health system from an underperforming, disjointed health system into a high-performing, integrated health system that gives beneficiaries what they need and deserve—the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

In a world of multiplying threats and increasing danger, we count on young Americans to enlist or commit to serve in the All-Volunteer Force that protects us and our families. The NDAA sustains the quality of life for the men and women and the total force and their families and addresses the needs of our wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers.

The NDAA authorizes a 2.2-percent across-the-board pay raise for members of the uniformed services, the largest military pay raise for our troops since 2010. The legislation authorizes over 30 special pays and bonuses to support recruitment and retention and ensures fair treatment for our Reserve members under their survivor benefit plan.

The NDAA also addresses a disturbing situation affecting members of the California National Guard who have been caught up in a scandal involving the improper issuance of bonuses. The legislation holds the Department of Defense responsible for expediting the review process, reaching out to each impacted servicemember, and notifying credit reporting agencies when debts have been forgiven.

The NDAA also implements the recommendations of the Department of Defense Military Justice Review Group by incorporating the Military Justice Act of 2016. The legislation modernizes the military court-martial trial and appellate practice, incorporates best practices from Federal criminal practice and procedures, and increases transparency and independent review in the military justice system.

Taken together, the provisions contained in the NDAA constitute the most significant reforms to the Uniform Code of Military Justice in a generation. As we implement these important defense reforms, we have to rebuild a modern and ready Armed Forces prepared to meet current and future threats. The NDAA authorizes a total of \$619 billion for defense discretionary spending, which is \$3.2 billion above President Obama's budget request. That includes the \$5.8 billion in supplemental funding requested by President Obama for operations in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. The NDAA prioritizes modernization to provide critical military capabilities to our warfighters, fifth-generation fighter aircraft, stealth attack submarines, vital munitions, more lethal and survivable armored vehicles and helicopters.

The legislation also fully supports the modernization of our nuclear triad and makes timely investments in research and development efforts to produce cutting-edge military technologies. Through a combination of added funds and redirected savings, the NDAA directs \$4.6 billion to address the military readiness crisis by reducing training shortfalls, supporting weapons maintenance, and sustaining facilities.

Critically, the NDAA stems the drawdown of military end strength that has exacerbated the readiness crisis, especially in the Army and Marine Corps. As we meet our commitments to our warfighters, we must also uphold our commitment to American taxpayers. The NDAA imposes strict oversight measures on programs such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, B-21 Long Range Strike Bomber, the Ford-class aircraft carrier, the littoral combat ship.

These provisions will ensure accountability for results, promote transparency, protect taxpayers, and drive the Department to deliver our warfighters the capabilities they need on time, as promised, and at a reasonable cost. The NDAA upholds America's commitments to its allies and partners. It authorizes \$3.4 billion to support our Afghan partners as they take the fight to our common terrorist enemies.

The legislation authorizes \$3.4 billion for the European initiative to deter Russian aggression. This is a very critical item, as we see more and more aggressive behavior, both in cyber, propaganda, and actual on-the-ground activities by Vladimir Putin—a fourfold increase from last year in the European deterrence initiative.

It provides \$1.2 billion for counter-ISIL operations. It authorizes up to \$350 million in security assistance to Ukraine, including lethal assistance. One of the things that has disappointed me as much as anything else, in some ways more, is that this President has refused to give defensive weaponry to the Ukrainians who are watching their country be dismembered by Vladimir

Putin, the same Vladimir Putin whose anti-air system shot down an airline, the same one who is slaughtering and killing brave Ukrainians as we speak.

This President has refused to give them weapons to defend themselves. This will be, again, the third year in a row where we have authorized it. This is another shameful chapter in the history of Obama's feckless administration as far as national defense is concerned.

Finally, the legislation includes \$600 million to modernize Israel's layered missile defense system. As we continue to support allies and partners against common threats, the NDAA makes major reforms to the Pentagon's complex and unwieldy Security Cooperation Enterprise, which has complicated the ability of the Department of Defense to effectively prioritize, plan, execute, and oversee these activities.

The NDAA consolidates security cooperation authorities from Title 10 and elsewhere in public law into a single chapter of U.S. Code. For the first time, this legislation requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a consolidated security cooperation budget, and the legislation modernizes the security cooperation workforce. Together, these steps will improve operational outcomes, program management, congressional oversight, and public transparency.

This legislation takes several steps to bolster border security and homeland defense. It authorizes \$933 million for Department of Defense counterdrug programs. The legislation codifies the authority of the Secretary of Defense to provide support to Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement for counterdrug and countering transnational organized crime operations. It enhances information sharing and operational coordination between the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security.

Finally, this legislation takes important steps to strengthen cyber security. The legislation elevates U.S. Cyber Command to a unified command. As our senior military leadership has testified, this step is critical to providing the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command with the necessary unity of command and streamlined decision-making.

The NDAA also prevents the premature termination of the dual hat arrangement under which the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command also serves as the Director of the National Security Agency.

Let me close by saying that we ask a lot of our men and women in uniform. They never let us down. We must not let them down. So let's be bold on their behalf. This NDAA is an ambitious piece of legislation, but in the times we live in, we can't afford business as usual in the Department of Defense. We can't afford these terrible cost overruns. We just had a hearing on the littoral combat ship. It was supposed to cost \$200 million each. Now it costs \$460

million each, and it has a 30-millimeter gun and a helicopter pad on it.

We cannot do this to the American taxpayers. There was a front page story in the Washington Post just a couple of days ago about some \$125 billion that, in the view of an outside study, had been wasted. We cannot continue to do that to the taxpayers of America, and we certainly cannot afford to continue to do it given the challenges we face all over the world, which are unprecedented in the last 70 years.

Yesterday, I was honored to be asked to speak at the World War II Memorial commemorating the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. It was an uplifting experience because, thank God, there were so many of our brave warriors who fought and were present in the war that was fought by our greatest generation. There were even a couple who had been on board the USS *Arizona*, which was sunk with 1,117 brave officers and men on board.

You know, one of the lessons at Pearl Harbor was that we were not ready. We were not prepared. The Japanese airplanes that came in and bombed those ships and killed so many brave Americans—we had nothing that could combat them. At that time, the Japanese Zero was so far superior to anything that we had that it was a relatively easy mission for those Japanese Zeros to attack and destroy a good portion of America's Pacific Fleet at that time.

What I fear is not another Pearl Harbor, but what I fear is that with sequestration and with the continuing resolution—which apparently we are going to do, although I will fight as hard as I can against it—we are reducing the ability of our men and women to serve this Nation with effectiveness.

All of the four service chiefs—every one of them—when asked about sequestration and this kind of continuing resolution, have said one thing: We are putting the lives of the men and women who are serving our Armed Forces in uniform in greater jeopardy. Are we going to take the responsibility here with another continuing resolution to place the lives of the men and women serving this Nation at greater risk?

That is a terrible burden—a terrible burden I say to my colleagues, who, maybe because they want to get out of here for Christmas, will be voting for a continuing resolution that again cuts defense spending—cuts it—reduces it. That is not acceptable in light of the fact, by the way, that the President-elect has said he wants to spend more on defense. The President-elect has said: We are not spending enough. We are not doing enough.

By the way, we have to do it right. We need to spend more. We need to do it right. But when we see a front page story on the Washington Post that shows—I think it showed \$125 billion was wasted, then we also have an obligation to spend those taxpayer dollars correctly. This legislation, which I urge my colleagues to vote for as fol-

lowup to last year's, has significant reforms in the way the Pentagon does business.

I would like to tell you that now we have reformed the Pentagon and everything is fine. My friends, we have a long way to go. We have a long way to go. I am proud of the bipartisanship that exists on our committee. I am proud of the seriousness with which most—not all, but most—of the members of the committee take their duties as members of the committee. I am proud that my friend and colleague from Rhode Island and I work so closely together, not only we but our staffs, in the spirit that is demanded if we are going to carry out our higher responsibilities to the men who serve.

I am not proud—I am not proud—to see sequestration continue, the mindless, across-the-board cuts that have characterized the last few years. It is supported by both sides of the aisle, not just Democrats. I love to blame the Democrats for it, but both Democrats and Republicans have refused to address sequestration, which is destroying the readiness, which is—not destroying—it is harming the readiness of our men and women to serve and fight.

Operations are being canceled, parts are not available, the training is not available. It goes on and on and on. Why don't we listen? I am not asking you to listen to the civilians. Ask the leaders that we have asked to be the chiefs of their services. Ask the leaders who are component commands. They will all tell you the same thing: We are going to have to spend more money, but we are also going to have to spend it more wisely.

By the way, the Pentagon bureaucracy does not like many of these changes, just as last year we forced these changes on them, and now they all take credit for them. Fine, but now, there is another year of reforms. Next year, we are going to have to do more reforms, but unless we have the funding that is necessary to make these men and women who are serving in our military fully prepared to counter the new challenges, we are going to relive, in some form, December 7, 1941, in the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "A day that will live in infamy."

So I ask my colleagues to vote for this NDAA. We have had the input from literally every Member of this body, I am happy to say. I hope they will vote for this legislation. But I also—when they do—recognize that unless we fund these programs, unless we fund these reforms, unless we provide sufficient funding, then they are not going to be able to carry out their mission in the most effective fashion.

I say to my colleagues: Vote for this. Vote for this, but do not vote for another continuing resolution that will harm the ability of us and the men and women who are serving, and their leaders, to defend this Nation. It is a heavy responsibility you take on when you vote for the continuing resolution be-

cause that does not allow the Pentagon to move money around. It is an overall cut of many billions of dollars at a time that any observer will tell you is more challenging to our national security than any time since December 7, 1941.

I urge my colleagues to vote for the NDAA.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

All postcloture time has expired.

The question is on agreeing to the conference report.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON) would have voted "yea."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 92, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 159 Leg.]

#### YEAS—92

Alexander	Feinstein	Murray
Ayotte	Fischer	Nelson
Baldwin	Flake	Perdue
Barrasso	Franken	Peters
Bennet	Gardner	Portman
Blumenthal	Graham	Reed
Blunt	Grassley	Reid
Booker	Hatch	Risch
Boozman	Heinrich	Roberts
Boxer	Heitkamp	Rounds
Brown	Heller	Rubio
Burr	Hirono	Sasse
Cantwell	Hoeven	Schatz
Capito	Inhofe	Schumer
Cardin	Isakson	Scott
Carper	Johnson	Sessions
Casey	Kaine	Shaheen
Cassidy	King	Shelby
Coats	Kirk	Stabenow
Cochran	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Collins	Lankford	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Thune
Corker	Manchin	Tillis
Cornyn	McCain	Toomey
Crapo	McCaskill	Udall
Cruz	McConnell	Vitter
Daines	Menendez	Warner
Donnelly	Mikulski	Warren
Durbin	Moran	Whitehouse
Enzi	Murkowski	Wicker
Ernst	Murphy	

#### NAYS—7

Gillibrand	Merkley	Wyden
Lee	Paul	
Markley	Sanders	

NOT VOTING—

Cotton

The conference report was agreed to. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

## MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, for debate only, until 2:30 p.m. this afternoon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

## WRDA

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about drought legislation that is critical to the State of Arizona.

As everyone knows, water is a controversial issue in the West. Arizona and California have long been at odds on a number of water-related issues, particularly the Colorado River.

Since the beginning of this Congress, I have worked to advance Arizona's water priorities. That included working with our neighbors across the Colorado River to get a Flake-Feinstein amendment included in the Energy bill. This amendment, which was adopted on the floor, would allow dams to be more efficient and enhance water storage.

In addition to this amendment, I have introduced the Western Water Supply and Planning Enhancement Act in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I have worked with many of my colleagues on the committee to move this western drought bill through regular order, work that included attempting to find a way to reconcile this bill with the California drought bill in order to advance all of our priorities.

I am disappointed that instead of continuing with the committee process, a California-only deal was airdropped into an unrelated WRDA conference report. This was done at the last minute, circumventing regular order, and leaving Arizona and other western State priorities out to dry.

Not only does the WRDA conference report disregard the good work the Energy and Natural Resources Committee has carried out over these past 2 years, but it also fails to address western water matters in a holistic way. Let me be clear, important Arizona water issues still need to be addressed by Congress, and I will continue to fight for these priorities.

For example, the Colorado River Basin States are very close to reaching a groundbreaking agreement to deal with the prolonged drought on the river. We will seek legislation to implement this deal early in the next Congress.

Our watersheds are also under great threat from catastrophic wildfires. I

will continue to push Congress and the Forest Service to move ahead to reduce fire risks in Arizona.

I look forward to continuing my work on these issues and to fighting for other water needs in Arizona.

## ADA DRIVEBY LAWSUITS

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, in a driveby lawsuit, an attorney will drive by a place of business and look for technical ADA violations. These are usually minor violations that are easily correctable, like the width of a parking space or the height of a van accessible sign.

Oftentimes, if a technical violation exists, the attorney will either send a demand letter or threaten the business with a lawsuit. Oftentimes, the demand letter will request a settlement that is just under what it would cost the business to litigate, so the business owner picks the lesser of the two evils and pays the settlement.

The scope of the problem is only growing. From the first 6 months of 2015 to the first 6 months of 2016, there was a 63-percent increase in the number of suits filed under title III of the ADA. This year is on pace to see almost 7,000 of these cases brought forward—7,000. Compare 7,000 to the 4,800 lawsuits filed in 2015 and 2,700 in 2013, and we can see what a boon this has been for trial lawyers. In fact, this past Sunday, “60 Minutes” did a special report on driveby lawsuits and the toll they are taking on small businesses throughout the country. I would encourage anyone to watch that piece. It explains the problem very well.

While California, Florida, and New York have the highest incidents of these driveby lawsuits, my home State of Arizona has seen a dramatic increase in these suits over the last 3 years. In 2013, there were three ADA title III suits brought in Arizona—three. By 2015, that number was up to 207. As of September of this year, Arizona has already seen 284.

It is clear that the problem is only getting worse. My legislation would go a long way to solve it. If enacted, property owners must first be given notice of their alleged ADA violation, at which point they would have 120 days to cure the violation before a lawsuit could be brought. If the property owner fails to address the violation in a timely manner, then they can be sued. The bill also instructs the Department of Justice to promote further ADA compliance through education so small business owners know what is expected of them. I think these reforms will help business owners and persons with disabilities achieve their mutual goal of ADA compliance.

The ADA has been a great success in its 25-year history. It is essential that business owners continue to see it as a tool to ensure fairness for people with disabilities and not as a weapon to line the pockets of unscrupulous lawyers.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for 10 minutes.

## TRIBUTE TO HARRY REID

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, earlier today we heard a moving speech by the Democratic leader and my longtime friend, HARRY REID. He spoke of his life and his time here.

An amateur boxer turned police officer, turned lawyer, turned majority leader, that is the supercondensed outline of the life of HARRY REID. When the book closes on this 114th Congress, so too will it close on the congressional career of Senator REID. He is a fighter and a champion. That is an understatement.

He is a fellow country boy, but he had a much tougher upbringing in the isolated hamlet of Searchlight, NV. You can read about that in his book. That upbringing has bred traits that I have admired since he arrived in the Senate in 1987. His humble upbringing, raised in a shack with no indoor bathroom or hot water, sowed the seeds of a life in public service and of the perspective that has infused and driven his public service. He first came to Capitol Hill as a police officer, working nights to pay his way through George Washington University Law School. Little did he know he would end up being one of the longest serving majority leaders in the history of the U.S. Senate.

He can point to so many of the things he has done, including steering the Affordable Care Act to Senate passage. But I want to thank Senator REID for his strong support of justice bills that I have championed. An original cosponsor of the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization that I introduced in recent years—to strengthen and renew the transformative and lifesaving work that is made possible under VAWA—he has always worked to combat the scourge of domestic violence, helping to shepherd the reauthorization of this vital legislation across the finish line. He has also supported vital grant programs to put more cops on the street in communities small and large and to keep them safe. His commitment to advancing our comprehensive immigration reform bill, we got it through the Senate by a large bipartisan majority. When the history books are written, one of the huge mistakes made was when that the House of Representatives did not take up that bill, even though they had the votes to pass it. These are all examples of how true